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Application No. 09/529,304

Amendments to the Claims

The claims have been amended as follows.

1. (Previously Presented) An image decoding apparatus for decoding a first coded bit stream into which first header information and image coded data encoded in a first coding scheme are multiplexed, or for decoding a second coded bit stream into which second header information and image coded data encoded in a second coding scheme are multiplexed, said image decoding apparatus comprising:

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coding scheme decision means for making a decision as to whether a received coded bit stream is the first coded bit stream or the second coded bit stream and outputting a coding scheme identifier accordingly, based on a start code of a first kind included in the first header information or a start code of a second kind, different from the start code of the first kind, included in the second header information on the same layer as the start code of the first kind, the first header information further including first image coding information and the second header information further including second image coding information,

wherein the coding scheme identifier is used to switch between alternative decoding steps for decoding the image coded data in the first coded bit stream or the image coded data in the second coded bit stream.

Claims 2-3 (canceled).

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4. (Currently Amended) The image decoding apparatus according to claim 31, wherein said coding scheme decision means makes the decision in response to an H.263 start code included in the first header information, or to a VOL (Video Object Layer) start code included in the second header information.

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5. (Currently Amended) The image decoding apparatus according to claim 31, wherein said coding scheme decision means makes the decision in response to a picture start code included in the first header information, or to a VO (Video Object) start code included in the second header information.

6. (Previously Presented) An image coding apparatus comprising:

coding means for generating a first coded bit stream by encoding an image signal in a first coding scheme in accordance with a first predetermined compression algorithm standard; and

header information multiplexing means for multiplexing, into the first coded bit stream, header information, including image coding information in accordance with a second predetermined compression algorithm standard, for ensuring compatibility with a second coded bit stream encoded in a second coding scheme in accordance with the second predetermined compression algorithm standard.

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7. (Original) The image coding apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said header information multiplexing means multiplexes, as the header information for ensuring the compatibility, a start code of the second coding scheme, and coding scheme identification information indicative of the first coding scheme.

8. (Previously Presented) An image communications system comprising:

coding means for generating a first coded bit stream by encoding an image signal in a first coding scheme in accordance with a first predetermined compression algorithm standard;

decoding means for decoding a second coded bit stream coded in a second coding scheme in accordance with a second predetermined compression algorithm standard; and

coded bit stream converting means for transmitting the first coded bit stream received from said coding means to said decoding means, after multiplexing into the first coded bit stream first header information, including image coding information in accordance with the second predetermined compression algorithm standard, for ensuring compatibility, which is received from said decoding means.

9. (Previously Presented) A coded bit stream converting apparatus comprising:

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syntax analyzing means for inputting a first coded bit stream generated in a first coding scheme in accordance with a first predetermined compression algorithm standard, and for extracting first header information, including image coding information in accordance with a second predetermined compression algorithm standard, in the first coding scheme and image coded data;

decoding means for decoding the first header information extracted;

header information setting means for setting and coding second header information in a second coding scheme in response to the first header information decoded by said decoding means; and

multiplexing means for generating a second coded bit stream by multiplexing image coded data extracted by said syntax analyzing means with the second header information coded by said header information setting means.

10. (Previously Presented) An image decoding apparatus for decoding a first coded bit stream into which first header information including a start code of a first kind and image coded data encoded in a first coding scheme are multiplexed, or for decoding a second coded bit stream into which second header information including, in the same layer as the start code of the first kind, a start code of a second kind different from the first kind and image coded data

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encoded in a second coding scheme are multiplexed, said image decoding apparatus comprising:

coding scheme decision means for making a decision as to whether a received coded bit stream is the first coded bit stream or the second coded bit stream in response to the first header information or to the second header information, and for setting the coding scheme thus determined as the coding scheme identification information;

first decoding means for decoding the first header information by receiving the first coded bit stream; and

second decoding means for decoding the first header information by receiving the first coded bit stream so as to obtain the image coding information on the first coding scheme and for setting the image coding information on the second coding scheme based on the image coding information on the first coding scheme thus decoded,

wherein said image decoding apparatus decodes the image coded data included in the first coded bit stream or the image coded data included in the second coded bit stream, based on the image coding information on the second coding scheme, by switching between alternative decoding steps depending on the coding scheme identification information set by said coding scheme decision means.

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11. (Previously Presented) An image decoding apparatus for decoding a first coded bit stream into which first header information including a start code specific to the H.263 coding scheme and image coded data encoded in the H.263 coding scheme are multiplexed, or for decoding a second coded bit stream into which second header information including a start code specific to the MPEG-4 coding scheme and image coded data encoded in the MPEG-4 coding scheme are multiplexed, said image decoding apparatus comprising:

coding scheme decision means for making a decision as to whether a received coded bit stream is the first coded bit stream or the second coded bit stream and outputting a coding scheme identifier accordingly, based on the start code specific to the H.263 coding scheme or the start code specific to the MPEG-4 coding scheme,

wherein the coding scheme identifier is used to switch between alternative decoding steps for decoding the image coded data encoded in the first coded bit stream or the image coded data encoded in the second coded bit stream,

12. (Previously Presented) The image coding apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the first coding scheme is the H.263 standard and the second coding scheme is MPEG-4.

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13. (Previously Presented) The image coding apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the first coding scheme is the H.263 standard and the second coding scheme is MPEG-4.

14. (Previously Presented) The image coding apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the first coding scheme is the H.263 standard and the second coding scheme is MPEG-4.

15. (Previously Presented) The image coding apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the first coding scheme is the H.263 standard and the second coding scheme is MPEG-4.

16. (Previously Presented) An image decoding apparatus for decoding a first coded bit stream into which first header information including a start code of a first kind and image coded data encoded in a first coding scheme are multiplexed, or for decoding a second coded bit stream into which second header information including, in the same layer as the start code of the first kind, a start code of a second kind different from the first kind and image coded data encoded in a second coding scheme are multiplexed, said image decoding apparatus comprising:

coding scheme decision means for making a decision as to whether a received coded bit stream is the first coded bit stream or the second coded bit stream, based on a start code included in

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the first header information or in the second header information; decoding means for decoding image coding information on the second coding scheme included in the second header information by receiving the second coded bit stream; and

setting means for setting the image coding information on the second coding scheme, based on image coding information on the first coding scheme included in the first header information,

wherein said image decoding apparatus decodes the image coded data included in the first coded bit stream or in the second coded bit stream, based on the image coding information set by said setting means, the image coding information decoded by said decoding means and a result of decision by said coding scheme decision means, said image coding information set by said setting means being used to control alternative decoding steps of the second coding scheme.

17. (Previously Presented) The image decoding apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the coding scheme identification information is used to switch between decoding steps for coefficient data that constitute the image coded data of the first coded bit stream or the image coded data of the second coded bit stream.

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